

It had been the hap of the master to utilize these preliminary vagaries of his little flock by inviting them on assembly to recount any interesting incident of their journey hither; or, indeed, to afford him not infrequent opportunities of expressing his views. He earnestly interested them, and even that had occurred within their knowledge which they last met. He had done this, partly to give them time to discuss their matters more fully, and partly, and, I fear, because, notwithstanding his conscientious gravity, it greatly amused him. It also diverted them from their usual round of vexatious contemplation of him, and, generally, brought them to a more cheerful morning inspection. He warmly embraced every detail of his dress and appearance, and made every change or deviation the subject of whispered comment or stony astonishment. He was not, however, so susceptible as the members of his flock, and shrunk not from the sight of a new coat, or a new pair of trousers. But, when he found out that the master was neither startling nor unfamiliar. The master, after once recognized, he was not so much startled as he had been. He was not so much startled as he had been. He was not so much startled as he had been.

"No," said the master, relenting still more as he glanced at Uncle Ben's perplexed face with a faint smile.

"And I reckon you'd be saying the name of Jones' astronomy and algebery? Things hev changed. You've got all the new style here," he continued with unaffected carelessness, but studiously avoiding the master's eye. "For a man that's got more on Parsings, Dobell, and Jones than don't appear to be much show nowadays."

The master did not reply. Observing

CHAPTER II.

As the children were slowly straggling to their places the next morning the master waited for an opportunity to speak to Rupert. That beautiful but so severely amiable youth, was as usual, surrounded and impeded by a group of his small female admirers, for whom, it is but just to add, he had a supreme contempt. Possibly it was this healthy quality that inclined the master towards him, and it was consequently with some satisfaction

which had made him—the grown-up dreamer—acceptable to them in his genuine understanding of their needs and weaknesses—now seemed to have vanished forever.

At recess, Octavia Dean, who had drawn near Cressy and reached up to place her arm round the older girl's wrist, glanced at her with a patronizing smile born of some rapid free-masonry and laughingly retired with the others. The master at his desk and Cressy who had halted in the aisle, were left alone.

There was no indignation yet from your father, but the girl thought that

of the quality. The grounds of the cottages were yet uncleared of underbrush; bear and catamount still prowled around the rude fences of the ranches; the late alleged experience of the infant Elgee was by no means improbable or unprecedent.

aged had for years occupied a self-imposed maternal and protecting relation not only to her husband and brothers, but to the three or four men, who as partners in the hardware line, and as the ranch, inherited and trained in the family, what she called her "boys" and her "men folk," and their needs had pertained to her. She was a fair type of class not uncommon on the southwest frontier; women who were ruder helpmeets of their rude husbands and brothers, who had shared the privations and sufferings with